

# 1.0 Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) Standards

## 1.1. Definitions

*Rationale: A Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) is an individual in recovery from mental illness or mental illness with a co-occurring substance use disorder who uses his/her lived experience and specialized training to assist other individuals in their own recovery. The relationship between the CPS and the other recovering individual is one of mutual respect and support built on a connection and trust not obtainable through other service relationships.*

- 1.1.1. Certified Peer Specialist has a mental illness or a mental illness and co-occurring substance use disorder diagnosis and at least one (1) year of lived experience receiving behavioral health services from a behavioral health service system.
- 1.1.2. Certified Peer Specialist completes the forty-hour Appalachian Group/DBSA (Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance) training.
- 1.1.3. Certified Peer Specialist passes the Appalachian Group/DBSA certification exam with a score of 70% or higher.
- 1.1.4. Certified Peer Specialist understands and lives by [Idaho's Certified Peer Specialist Code of Ethics](#).
- 1.1.5. Certified Peer Specialist engages, educates, guides and supports recovering individuals to create new ways of seeing, thinking and doing in order to have healthy relationships and live successfully in the community. These new ways are determined by the individual being served.
- 1.1.6. Certified Peer Specialist is non-clinical and does not diagnose or offer primary treatment for mental health issues.

**Special considerations:** Eligibility to provide peer support services may depend on the nature of the employment and whether the CPS either passes a criminal background check or qualifies for a criminal background check waiver according to criteria outlined in IDAPA.

## 1.2. Qualifications

*Rationale: The life experience of someone living with a mental illness or co-occurring diagnosis is most understood by someone who has also lived this sort of experience. Certain qualifications are needed to understand and know how to navigate the systems involved in creating a healthy and positive life. It is only ethical that the Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) meets certain criteria when working with individuals who may need support in working toward recovery.*

- 1.2.1. Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) candidate has lived experience as someone who has a mental health diagnosis or co-occurring diagnosis and has at least (1) ongoing and continuous year of recovery as verified by a qualified health practitioner/behavioral health provider.
- 1.2.2. CPS candidate completes the Idaho Peer Specialist Certification Training Application which includes questions regarding one's lived experience.
- 1.2.3. CPS candidate submits two letters of recommendation with the training application.

- 1.2.4. CPS candidate completes 40 contact hours of training specifically designated for Idaho Certified Peer Specialists and approved by the State Behavioral Health Authority.
- 1.2.5. CPS candidate passes a post-training assessment established by the training entity and approved by the State Behavioral Health Authority.
- 1.2.6. A Letter of Completion is mailed to the CPS candidate. The letter states either approval for the individual to take the certification exam or it provides individualized recommendations for the candidate to complete before moving forward with the certification exam.
- 1.2.7. Work Experience and Education:
  - 1.2.7.1. If the CPS candidate holds a bachelor's degree in human services (e.g. social work, psychology, education, sociology, social sciences), he/she documents 100 hours of work experience in the human services field within a year from completing the training. If the 100 hours of work experience are not completed within a year, a review is required by the certifying body.
  - 1.2.7.2. If the CPS candidate does not hold a bachelor's degree in human services (e.g., social work, psychology, education, sociology, social sciences), he/she must have a high school diploma or GED and documents 200 hours of work experience in the human services field within a year of completing the training. If the 200 hours of work experience are not completed within a year, a review is required by the certifying body.
- 1.2.8. CPS candidate completes 20 supervision hours with a designated Idaho CPS Supervisor within a year of completing the training.
- 1.2.9. CPS candidate passes the Idaho Certified Peer Specialist Exam with a score that meets the standard set by the certifying body authorized by the State Behavioral Health Authority.
- 1.2.10. Accommodations for the exam are provided as deemed necessary by the individual taking the exam. Examples of accommodations include, but are not limited to, extra time, a separate room, and use of a computer.
- 1.2.11. CPS Supervisor is a degreed professional in the field of human services who has supervisory capacity within the agency and is designated as a CPS Supervisor by the certifying body.
- 1.2.12. The CPS Supervisor obtains such designation by applying to the approved certifying body and following the approved process for said designation. The certifying body maintains a current list of approved Supervisors.
- 1.2.13. CPS maintains a working knowledge of current recovery trends and developments in the fields of mental health, substance use disorders, current research as it relates to behavioral health, wellness and recovery, ethical practices and peer support services by reading current journals, books, etc., attending webinars, workshops and conferences as they relate to these fields, and sharing with other CPSs.
- 1.2.14. CPS must be at least 18 years old.
- 1.2.15. To avoid role ambiguity and conflict, CPS does not fulfill other service roles (therapist, counselor, case manager, nurse, physician, clergy, etc.) to participants they are providing peer services to; nor do they practice outside the scope of their peer specialist training.

**Special considerations:** A clinician or professional person may hold certification as a CPS; however, a CPS working with a particular individual as a CPS provider cannot also be the clinician (i.e. other professional) who is providing any other services to that same individual. In other words, an individual cannot be the CPS provider and other professional provider of a participant at the same time.

Safety is an important concern, therefore background checks may be required by law and rule, but are the responsibility of the agency or place of employment, and are not part of the certification process.

### 1.3. Training

*Rationale: Training equips the Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) with additional and necessary knowledge, understanding and skills. Documentation of trained Specialists establishes verification and credibility for agencies employing CPSs. Training adds to the participant's confidence and trust in the CPS's abilities with whom they are working.*

- 1.3.1 CPS training includes, at a minimum, the following competency areas:
  - 1.3.1.1 overview of mental illness and substance use disorders and their effects on the brain,
  - 1.3.1.2 the stages of recovery and the role peer support plays in it,
  - 1.3.1.3 the state behavioral health system and the role peers play within it,
  - 1.3.1.4 advocacy for recovery programs and for the peers they serve,
  - 1.3.1.5 the practice of recovery values: authenticity, self-determination, diversity, inclusion, etc.
  - 1.3.1.6 how to use your recovery story to help others,
  - 1.3.1.7 ethics (boundaries, confidentiality, HIPAA, etc.),
  - 1.3.1.8 the identification of risk factors in participants' behaviors and how to respond in/to a crisis,
  - 1.3.1.9 the use of interpersonal and professional communication skills,
  - 1.3.1.10 effecting change,
  - 1.3.1.11 work place dynamics and processes,
  - 1.3.1.12 empowering others,
  - 1.3.1.13 family dynamics,
  - 1.3.1.14 the effects of trauma and use of a trauma informed approach,
  - 1.3.1.15 wellness and natural supports,
  - 1.3.1.16 maintaining one's wellness,
  - 1.3.1.17 cultural sensitivity,
  - 1.3.1.18 recovery plans, and
  - 1.3.1.19 local, state and national resources.
- 1.3.2 Training is 40 hours of face-to-face instruction that is conducted by an IDHW DBH approved training entity. The training entity is separate from the certifying body. The certifying body is responsible for verifying competencies.
- 1.3.3 Curriculum includes all types of learning methods, including role-playing scenarios as a key element of building skills.

**Special considerations:** Any exceptions to the training as outlined here are reviewed by the certifying body.

### 1.4. Certification and Renewal

*Rationale: Professional certifications lend credibility to the individual professional, as well as to the employer. Certification of Peer Specialists ensures that those who employ Certified Peer Specialists are employing individuals who have consistent experiences and qualifications. Certification provides employers and participants with evidence and documentation that the certificate holder has demonstrated a certain level of job-related knowledge, skills, abilities, and practical experience. Certification also empowers the holder via the knowledge and skills obtained, as well as by the fact that he/she has successfully accomplished the completion of all requirements.*

- 1.4.1. Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) meets the qualifications as stated in section 1.2.
- 1.4.2. Persons claiming to hold certification status as a CPS hold documentation of said certification.
- 1.4.3. CPS certification is good for one year.
- 1.4.4. CPS professional renews his/her certification annually by:
  - 1.4.4.1. completing at least 10 hours of continuing education approved by the certifying body for Idaho's CPS (e.g. trainings, workshops, webinars) per year and documenting said education. Continuing education topics can be from any of the competencies listed in the training competencies section in 1.3, AND
  - 1.4.4.2. completing a renewal application, AND
  - 1.4.4.3. maintaining a no-violations record regarding the CPS Code of Ethics
- 1.4.5. CPS follows the Certification Renewal Procedure put forth by the certifying body for Idaho's CPSs.
- 1.4.6. CPS is responsible for ensuring that the certifying body has all current documentation necessary for satisfying the certification criteria.
- 1.4.7. Employers of CPSs are responsible to check with the centralized certification body to ensure that the CPS which they wish to hire has current certification status as a certified CPS in Idaho.
- 1.4.8. The state's approved certifying agency tracks certifications and continuing education status of Idaho's Certified Peer Specialists.

**Special considerations:** Continuing education hours are approved by the certifying agency to renew certification.

## **1.5 Termination, Inactive Status & Reactivation**

*Rationale: Certification reveals to others that a person has reached a particular level of competency. If these levels are not maintained, a person's certification may be terminated or revoked. Termination can be due to, but is not limited to, deficient documentation or a Code of Ethics violation.*

- 1.5.1 . Deficient documentation is the failure to submit on time requested documentation and application for certification and renewal, or any other requested materials from the certifying entity
- 1.5.2 . A Code of Ethics Violation is the failure to abide by the Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) Code of Ethics and/or providing false information on documents
- 1.5.3 . Inactive Status is when a CPS in good standing requests such status because he/she is unable to meet the requirements for recertification due to a decline in physical or mental health or an extenuating circumstance; such as: death of a close relative, divorce or marriage, long-term illness of family member, loss of employment, birth or adoption of a child, military deployment, or other circumstance that is approved by the certifying body.

- 1.5.4 . Reactivation is accomplished by submitting all required documentation, including a new application packet and verification of CEUs earned within one year of resubmission.
- 1.5.4.1. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all documentation is completed and submitted.
- 1.5.4.2. If application is incomplete, a deficiency letter is sent to the applicant and applicant has 30 calendar days to mail all required documents. If 30 days go by and documents are not received by the certifying body, the applicant's certification expires and applicant will need to re-apply, submitting all certification documentation and a new application.
- 1.5.5. Applicants who have violated the Code of Ethics will, in addition to the documentation in 1.5.4, submit a report that details the nature of the violation, admission of the violation, corrective actions taken and insurance that the violation will not recur. The CPS Peer Review Board, which is defined by the certifying entity, will determine re-instatement based on the seriousness of the violation, applicant's report and the corrective actions taken.

**Special considerations:** Inactive status is not granted for the failure to comply with continuing education requirements or a reported Code of Ethics violation.

## **1.6. Reciprocity**

*Rationale: The time and effort that a person expends obtaining a Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) certification is valued. Idaho also values its certification process and therefore, reciprocity from another state's certifying board is permitted as long as certain conditions are met.*

- 1.6.1. Applicant requesting reciprocity to provide services in Idaho must have completed the Appalachian Group/DBSA curriculum and passed the Appalachian Group/DBSA certification exam within the past 2 years.
- 1.6.2. Applicant submits an Idaho CPS application along with a copy of his/her certification and a copy of his/her current CPS certificate or equivalent from another state.
- 1.6.3. If Idaho's certifying agency finds the applicant deficient in any of Idaho's requirements, a letter explaining needed documentation will be sent to the applicant. The applicant has 30 calendar days to respond with an explanation as to how the requirements will be completed and 60 days to complete said requirements.

**Special considerations:** Safety is an important concern, therefore background checks may be required by law and rule, but are the responsibility of the agency or place of employment, and are not part of the certification process.

## **1.7. Reporting Changes**

*Rationale: Idaho values its Certified Peer Specialists (CPSs) and wants to maintain communication with each person. The best way to do this is to know how to reach each CPS to report CPS news, events and any changes to the certification requirements. It also aids in networking with all CPSs in the state. In addition, this allows IDHW to know how many CPSs are available in different parts of the state and who they are.*

- 1.7.1. Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) reports changes in name, address, telephone number and email address.

- 1.7.2. CPS reports a change in supervisor's name.
- 1.7.3. CPS reports a change in employment status.
- 1.7.4. CPS reports a violation in Code of Ethics.

**Special considerations:** Failure to report changes may result in termination of certification or other disciplinary measure.

## **1.8. Grievance Procedures**

*Rationale: There are times when applicants will not agree with decisions made the certifying board. To be properly and fairly heard, a procedure has been identified for the applicant to voice his/her grievance.*

- 1.8.1. Applicant may file a grievance when there is a valid factual reason to do so; such as, being denied certification, questioning the outcome of the review board, or applicant is subject to an action by the certifying board that he/she deems unjustified.
- 1.8.2. Applicant must file said grievance within 30 days of notice or action deemed unjustified to the certifying board.
- 1.8.3. Contracted entity reviews the grievance.

## **1.9. Provision of Peer Support Services**

*Rationale: Depending on the scope of work of the agency in which the Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) is employed, the tasks carried out by the CPS can vary. Generally speaking, the services that a CPS provides should be participant-centered, participant-driven, culturally sensitive, recovery-based and community-based with the participant's rights protected. These services broaden the continuum of care provided in the typical treatment setting; they are part of an array of services. Peer support services are partners to more traditional services, but should not be used as a substitute for clinical services when the need for clinical services is indicated. The purpose for these services is to complement treatment and help the participant feel less isolated and more empowered within their recovery and engaged in their community.*

- 1.9.1. Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) services may be provided to all participants who are in need of such services.
- 1.9.2. Participant outcomes expected during and after a CPS works with a participant include, but are not limited to:
  - 1.9.2.1. Ability to identify and use wellness tools;
  - 1.9.2.2. demonstrated ability to live more independently;
  - 1.9.2.3. re-engaging with support systems that had been lost;
  - 1.9.2.4. increase in education, employment and/or volunteerism;
  - 1.9.2.5. improved housing situation;
  - 1.9.2.6. improved quality of life;
  - 1.9.2.7. sense of purpose;
  - 1.9.2.8. increased empowerment;
  - 1.9.2.9. belief that recovery is possible;
  - 1.9.2.10. increased self-esteem;
  - 1.9.2.11. demonstrated ability to self-advocate; and
  - 1.9.2.12. increased participation in community and positive activities.

- 1.9.3. Services are non-clinical and designed to help initiate and sustain the individual in his/her recovery. Services provided by the CPS are voluntary and include, but are not limited to:
  - 1.9.3.1. peer mentoring;
  - 1.9.3.2. facilitating support groups;
  - 1.9.3.3. assisting participant in engaging or re-engaging with participant's natural supports (e.g. family, friends, other loved ones, neighbors);
  - 1.9.3.4. facilitating job readiness training;
  - 1.9.3.5. facilitating wellness and recovery seminars;
  - 1.9.3.6. providing educational materials or programs;
  - 1.9.3.7. assisting in the development of participants' goals;
  - 1.9.3.8. assisting participant to develop self-advocacy and problem-solving skills;
  - 1.9.3.9. role modeling behaviors, attitudes and skills that promote recovery and wellness that is needed for resiliency and coping;
  - 1.9.3.10. assisting participants with identifying and utilizing their strengths;
  - 1.9.3.11. role modeling the facilitation of collaborative relationships;
  - 1.9.3.12. assisting participants in accessing community and social services, including self-help groups;
  - 1.9.3.13. link participant to professional treatment when necessary;
  - 1.9.3.14. assisting with the development of community supports;
  - 1.9.3.15. assisting at peer and consumer operated programs;
  - 1.9.3.16. assisting with substance-free physical and recreational activities; and
  - 1.9.3.17. advocating for the needs of participants.
- 1.9.4. These services shall be delivered primarily face-to-face, and secondarily by telephone or social media.
- 1.9.5. Services are delivered individually and in group settings.
- 1.9.6. CPS shares his/her personal story when appropriate for the benefit of the participant with whom he/she is serving and supporting, keeping in mind that this is but one experience and it does not mean that others will have the same experience or needs.
- 1.9.7. Frequency and Length of Service:
  - 1.9.7.1. The frequency by which a CPS meets and works with the participant and the length of this service is determined by the peer, CPS and mental health clinician.
  - 1.9.7.2. The frequency and length of service are periodically re-evaluated depending on the intensity of the CPS services needed. The higher the intensity and frequency of the services, the more often a reevaluation occurs.
- 1.9.8. CPS performs activities *with* an individual, and not *for* or *to* the individual so that the individual can regain control over their own life.
- 1.9.9. CPS is under the direct supervision of a designated CPS Supervisor.
- 1.9.10. CPS refers participant to the appropriate resources if they are unable to benefit from peer services.
- 1.9.11. CPS working within an agency adheres to the documentation requirements of the agency.

**Special considerations:** Services that a CPS does not provide: counseling/therapy, social work, drug testing, diagnosing of symptoms and disorders, prescribing, acting as a legal representative, participating in the determination of competence, and providing legal advice. CPS work to equalize the power differentials in the peer support relationship.

### **1.10. Organizational Readiness and Responsibility**

*Rationale: Optimal employment and use of a certified peer specialist requires awareness and understanding of peer recovery, resilience, trauma and hope as they relate to the Certified Peer Specialist providing services and to the participants who receive these services.*

*Certified Peer Specialists are an equal member of the staff.*

- 1.10.1. Organizational Readiness is preparing an organization or agency for the employment of a Certified Peer Specialist (CPS); ensuring that staff members understand the purpose of CPSs and how CPS duties enhance the organization's mission, including any unique issues to employing CPSs.
- 1.10.2. Agency establishes a readiness plan that includes criteria, by which the agency hires, supervises and works to maintain CPSs.
- 1.10.3. Agency that employs CPSs communicates clearly and respectfully with all employees, including CPSs, about practices that are most effective in promoting recovery and resilience of participants receiving services from the organization.
- 1.10.4. Agency engages in educational opportunities for all staff that prepare them to better understand the strengths and opportunities offered by the CPS
- 1.10.5. Agency adheres to Idaho's CPS standard and all other agency-related standards.
- 1.10.6. Agency ensures that all CPSs are supervised by a CPS Supervisor who has been designated as such by the certifying body, and that the services rendered by the CPS are under a comprehensive, individualized, participant-centered-and-driven plan.
- 1.10.7. CPS Supervisors are designated by each agency that employs CPSs and the Supervisor is approved by the certifying body. A list of approved CPS Supervisors is maintained by the certifying body.
- 1.10.8. Agency utilizes trauma-informed principles when employing CPSs.
- 1.10.9. The state's approved certifying agency tracks certifications and continuing education status of Idaho's Certified Peer Specialists.
- 1.10.10. Agency does not employ or utilize clients who are receiving services at their agency as a peer specialist for that agency.
- 1.10.11. Agency develops a written job description that specifies the duties and responsibilities of the CPS within that agency.

**Special considerations:** Dual relationships are important ethical considerations when staffing an agency. Hiring a former participant as a CPS could present difficulty for the CPS and staff. Several of the issues that arise from this practice include: privacy and access to records, access to treatment services for the CPS if needed, and residual power differential among staff.

### **1.11. Ethics**

*Rationale: A code of ethics in any profession guides the professional in areas of role-function, relationships, levels of responsibilities and liability.*

- 1.11.1. Certified Peer Specialist adheres to the Idaho CPS Code of Ethics while performing duties of a CPS.



- 1.11.2. CPS completes at least annual ethics training, provided by either an employer or via other avenues approved by the certifying body.
- 1.11.3. Agencies that employ CPSs provide accessible opportunities for ethics training to all service- providing staff members, including CPSs, at least annually.
- 1.11.4. Provider organizations document completion of ethics training in each employee's file, including each CPS's file.
- 1.11.5. CPS keeps personal documentation of completed ethics training as required by the certifying body.

**Special considerations:** A clinician or professional person may hold certification as a CPS; however, a CPS working with a particular participant as a CPS provider cannot also be the clinician (i.e. other professional) who is providing any other services to that same participant. In other words, an individual cannot be the CPS provider and the other professional provider of a participant at the same time.

**Additional Considerations:** *Agencies that employ Certified Peer Specialists adhere to this standard and all of the Core Standards put forth by the State Behavioral Health Authority.*

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#### Questions:

**What is the difference between a certified peer specialist and a peer specialist?** Only the certified peer specialist has completed the required training and demonstrated competency in the Idaho Peer Specialist standards.

**How can someone become a certified peer specialist if they have achieved a level of recovery that no longer requires professional support – since there is a 1 year documented experience requirement from a provider?** Every situation is unique so contacting the certifying entity to discuss the specifics of your situation would be best. Different types of documentation from a professional may be accepted and it does not necessarily have to be from a currently treating provider.

**Why does a certified peer specialist with a bachelor's degree in human services require fewer work experience hours than a peer without a degree?** Knowledge of service delivery and theoretical approaches are core features of bachelor's degree programs. Given the graduate's experience in this area, fewer experience hours are needed.

**Where did the requirement for 200 experience hours or 100 with bachelor's degree come from?** The Department's behavioral health standards workgroup researched national and other states' standards for peer support, family support, and recovery coaching. Some standards require up to 1,000 hours of work experience. This requirement for Idaho's standards was decided on among the workgroup to ensure an adequate amount of knowledge and experience while maintaining a level of feasibility for prospective peer service providers in Idaho.

**How long does a certified peer specialist have to report changes to the certifying body?** This is determined by the certifying entity but should be done as soon as feasible.